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## Employee Spotlight

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### *Percy Ayers and Jeff Hensley – Exceptional Work!*

- ◆ The below message was sent from Assistant Director, Division of Geology and Mineral Resources of Virginia Department of Mines, Minerals and Energy (VDMME) Matt Heller.
  - “I am writing to pass along just how grateful I am to Jeff and Percy for their assistance today in moving a new rock saw into our lab area. This was a large, heavy and awkwardly-shaped piece of equipment. Getting it into position required getting it upstairs, through three doorways, and placing it in an elevated containment area. We were able to provide some strong backs, but Jeff and Percy were the brains of the operation. Their smart decisions and can-do attitude allowed us to get it into place efficiently without removing any doors and without damaging walls or the saw. Most importantly, they allowed for this work to be done safely.

- What is amazing to me is that this is not exceptional for either Jeff or Percy. I am always impressed with their prompt response, positive and helpful attitude, and the knowledge that they bring to their work. Jeff and Percy have helped us in so very many ways over the years, and I want to be sure that you know how much DMME and I appreciate it.”

## Employee News

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### *Leaving VDOF!*

- ◆ Stuart Sours (water quality specialist) is retiring from VDOF on September 1 after 35 years of service. Congratulations, Stuart – enjoy your retirement!

## Coming Up

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### *Generation NEXT Fall Workshops – Family Land, Pass it on*

- ◆ Thousands of acres of family-owned land in Virginia will change hands in the next two to three decades, and many of these transfers will happen with very little to no planning unless we encourage landowners to do so!
- ◆ Do you know forest or farm landowners who care deeply about their land and want them to stay intact, to stay in farm or forest, and to stay in their family? If so, please encourage them to sign up for and participate in the Generation NEXT program’s fall workshop at [www.ext.vt.edu/generationnext-va](http://www.ext.vt.edu/generationnext-va).
- ◆ VDOF and Virginia Cooperative Extension are holding Virginia’s Generation NEXT program fall workshop online *September 8, 9, 15 and 16*. Each session is just 1.5 hours from 3:00 - 4:30 p.m. and will feature a variety of experts and includes a free copy of the “Legacy Planning: A Guide for Virginia Landowners” workbook.
- ◆ The Generation NEXT Legacy Planning Webinar Series will inform and equip Virginia Landowners (no matter where they live) to “do legacy planning” well.

## Last Week

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### *State Forester*

- ◆ Rob Farrell, Terry Lasher (assistant state forester), Sabina Dhungana (utilization and marketing program manager) and Rachel Harris (utilization and marketing specialist) participated in a tour of the Speyside Bourbon Stave Mill in Glade Springs. This tour was followed by a tour of the Speyside Bourbon Cooperage in Vinton. The purpose of the tours was to learn about Speyside's manufacturing process, their thoughts regarding the white oak resource, workforce needs and status, and to begin introducing the VDOF's new Utilization and Marketing team to our industry partners.
- ◆ Rob Farrell attended the reception for the reveal of the Stately Treasures tree walk at the National Arboretum. This is a self-guided tour that includes stops at the official “state trees” of all 50 states and the District of Columbia and replaces what was previously the Grove of State Trees. This event was hosted by the USDA Forest Service, and National Association of State Foresters (NASF).

### *Fire and Emergency Response*

- ◆ John Miller (director of fire and emergency response) completed the two-week Virginia Executive Institute (VEI) on August 20. The program, which is run by VCU’s Performance Management Group, provides an opportunity for state agency leaders to challenge themselves to achieve new levels of excellence in public service, re-examine and develop their leadership vision, advance their skills in inspiring others around core mission and goals, dialogue about current issues facing state government,

interact with leaders who are fostering change within the Commonwealth, and build a lasting network of colleagues for cooperation and collaboration.

- The final project for VEI involves a “Leadership Challenge” where participants worked in small groups to identify and develop a solution for current issues in Virginia state government. John’s group focused on telework expansion, developing a simple, universal, teleworking evaluation matrix. The matrix provides an objective tool for determining both the suitability of a single position, as well as an individual employee within that position for either a hybrid-telework or full-telework environment.
- Here is the list of all of the Leadership Challenge projects presented during John’s session:
  - a. A Tool for Objective Classification of Expanded Telework Suitability for State Positions (John’s group)
  - b. Breaking the Glass Ceiling: Developing Diverse Leaders
  - c. Socio-Economic Impact of COVID-19 on Commercial Real Estate
  - d. Developing Community Engagement Partnerships: Utilizing the Commonwealth’s Greatest Resource
  - e. Ensuring a Robust Civil Service Workforce

## Forestland Conservation

- ◆ Lara Johnson (urban and community forestry [U&CF] program manager) and Molly O’Liddy (U&CF partnership coordinator) met with (Jordan Herring (senior area forester), Kinner Ingram (urban forest specialist) and Jim McGlone (urban forest conservationist) to discuss projects occurring throughout the Potomac work area.
- ◆ Molly O’Liddy and Eli Podyma (urban forest specialist) for the Capital work area, gave a presentation to a local Richmond group, 'Green Drinks'. The group is composed of green industry professionals from various organizations. The presentation included information about grants available through VDOF's Urban and Community Forestry program.
- ◆ Lara Johnson and Dr. Jeremy Hoffman of the Science Museum of Virginia spoke to the Chesapeake Bay Stakeholder Advisory Group about urban heat island mapping in Virginia and ways we are using tree planting to restore canopy and combat urban heat islands.
- ◆ The Urban and Community Forestry grant period closed on Friday, August 20. The U&CF team will conduct rankings of all applications this week. Final awards will be issued to grantees by the beginning of September.
- ◆ Joe Lehnen (urban wood utilization forester) co-authored a VDOF blog post with Lori Chamberlin (forest health program manager and project lead) about the recently completed Emerald Ash Borer (EAB) Grand Slam outreach program to be published on the VDOF website.
- ◆ Sabina Dhungana and Terry Lasher met with the Virginia Tech (VT) Sustainable BioMaterials faculty in Blacksburg. The day was spent touring VT facilities, discussing past and future projects, and determining collaborations for the immediate future.

## Forestland Resource Management

- ◆ The State Land Use Evaluation and Advisory Council (SLEAC) met at VDOF Headquarters on August 18. At this annual meeting, the suggested forest land use values for 2022 were presented by Dean Cumbia (director of forest resource management) and Todd Groh (forest resource management program manager). The values may be used by counties that have use-value taxation, an option where forestland is assessed for local tax purposes on the basis of its use, rather than fair market value. This

year's values, determined by growth, yield and financial analysis models, increased an average of 7%, due to slightly higher timber prices, increase in inflation, and a change in the capitalization interest rate.

- ◆ Katlin DeWitt (forest health specialist), and Lori Chamberlin (forest health program manager), attended a planning meeting for the 2022 Virginia Association of Forest Health Professionals (VAFHP) conference. This meeting is set to take place in-person Feb 14-15 in Staunton, Virginia. Registration will open in October.
- ◆ Forest Health staff were interviewed by Virginia Cooperative Extension this summer while treating ash trees at McCormick Farm in June. This footage was turned into a "Fifteen Minutes in the Forest" episode which aired August 20, and can be viewed online: <https://youtu.be/SDPZkJGIog0>

## State Forest

- ◆ State Forests Sustainable Forest Initiative and American Tree Farm System Surveillance Audit results were released. The State Forests remain fully compliant with **no deficiencies or corrective actions noted or needs to be addressed.**
- ◆ Matthews State Forest was hit with more than 5 inches of rain and high winds on Tuesday night last week (remnants of Fred). Several trees were down across roads, roads were washed in several places, tree down on a deer enclosure, and one section of enclosure fence destroyed. Staff are working to repair all the damage.
- ◆ VDOT used Appomattox-Buckingham (AB) State Forest office and chainsaw training area for their chainsaw train-the-trainer event that was a week-long class.
- ◆ Mike Womack (forest management specialist) was on fire assignment with Northwest Team 9 in Oregon as operations branch director on the Middle Fork Complex and Type 2 operations section chief on the Black Butte Fire.
- ◆ Staff attended Board of Supervisors (BOS) meetings for Sussex, and King and Queen counties and presented checks for payment in lieu of taxes to each BOS for the 2020-2021 revenues generated off the state forests located in those counties.
- ◆ Staff gave a magazine interview about operations and management on the Zoar State Forest.
- ◆ Staff advertised the Pocahontas State Park pine thinning sale for Department Conservation and Recreation (DCR). The sale consists of 300 acres of pine thinning with a bid opening on September 21.
- ◆ Staff met Department of Historic Resources staff on Sandy Point State Forest to conduct an archeology survey.

## Central Region

- ◆ Kevin Dawson, Don Giegerich, Derek Keiser, and Zoë Sumrall (water quality specialists) conducted an internal silvicultural water quality program training for newer Central Region staff in Campbell County. Topics included harvest inspections, best management practice (BMP) audits, silvicultural water quality law, timber transaction law, conservation easements, and the Logger BMP Cost-Share program. Emphasis was placed on providing excellent communication, both to internal and external customers. A total of 17 VDOF employees were in attendance.

## Eastern Region

- ◆ The Eastern Region Incident Management Team (IMT) met to train as an IMT by planning an Equipment Training Day to be held at the New Kent Forestry Center on September 28. IMT members include Warren Coburn, Kathleen Ogilvy, Rich Reuse, Lisa Deaton (area foresters), John Rose (forest technician), Lisa Burke, Cindy Bronner (program support technicians), Ken Sterner, Matt Coleman, Robbie Lewis (senior area foresters), Heather Tuck (regional fire specialist), Jim Schroering (longleaf/southern pine beetle [SPB] prevention coordinator), and Manij Upadhyay (natural resource specialist). John Hisghman (deputy regional forester), Stephen Jasenak (area forester), and Zach Dowling (senior area forester) also assisted in the training segment of the day. (pictured)



## Western Region

- ◆ Bill Sweeney (area forester) worked with Jennifer Gagnon of the Virginia Forest Landowner Education Program to film a segment of "Fifteen Minutes in the Forest." This weekly video series presents various forestry topics to landowners across the state. This segment discussed pre-commercial thinning strategies, methods and importance, and provided information on the Commonwealth's Pine Bark Beetle Prevention Program. The segment can be found at the following link:  
[https://youtu.be/rEAJ7\\_nB2\\_E](https://youtu.be/rEAJ7_nB2_E)
- ◆ Thanks to our Headwaters work area team of Greg Estoll (senior area forester), Collin Sapp, Rocky Wood, and Emily Wotton (forest technicians) for cleaning out and closing down our Bastian equipment building in Bland County. This building dates back to the Civilian Conservation Corp (CCC) days and had outlived its usefulness to VDOF. The building will now be turned over to the property owners to store farm equipment.
- ◆ Chris Thomsen (regional forester) attended the Governor's Economic Development Announcement of Woodgrain Incorporated's expansion in Grayson and Smyth counties. Woodgrain is a family-owned company with millwork manufacturing sites across the country. They have been in business for 65 years and will make moldings and doors at their Virginia plant in Marion.

## News Clips

- ◆ [Forestry Workers Head Out to Fight Fires](#)
- ◆ [Va. firefighters head West to fight blazes, face 'whole different ballgame'](#)
- ◆ [Franklin County forester assists with western wildfires](#)
- ◆ [The business of timber and logging...and whiskey](#)
- ◆ [Crown Royal whiskey barrels reprocessed to fire up the grill](#)
- ◆ [Batteries made from trees could help transform the future of electric travel](#)
- ◆ [How to live with mega-fires? Portugal's feral forests may hold the secret](#)
- ◆ [Young Farmers compete in leadership contests at summer expo](#)
- ◆ [Front Royal hires new arborist](#)
- ◆ [Universities Measure Heat Disparities in Virginia](#)
- ◆ [Look out! A veteran fire spotter shares the view from her mountaintop perch](#)